

INDIA'S NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN MAGAZINE

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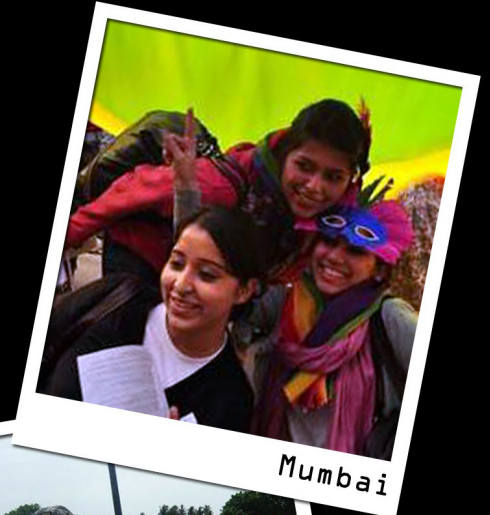
VJ SUSHANT
ON TELEVISION,
LIFE & SECTION 377

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**ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL
THE BEST OF
PINK PAGES**

KAZAKY BOYS

PHOTO FEATURE FROM THE UKRANIAN MUSIC BAND

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FROM THE EDITOR

Much water has passed under the bridge in the past few months. Most significantly, a new government is in power at the Center led by Narendra Modi. Although a BJP dispensation is no reason to rejoice for those who support LGBT rights since it has not come out in support of decriminalizing homosexuality- unlike the Congress party- the community must not stop engaging with the government simply because of the political party which is currently in power. It is good to see most LGBT community groups and leaders more than willing to reach out to the new regime for the cause of advancement of LGBT rights in India.

With this issue, we also complete five amazing years of Pink Pages! Over the years we've grown both in readership and in the quality of the content we publish. At the same time, we recognize the need to be creative and continuously innovate. Keeping up with that spirit, we will soon be launching a series of major change initiatives- from refurbishing the presentation to ramping up our staff.

I take this opportunity to thank all core team members, our contributors and of course our readers for making Pink Pages one of the most recognizable names of LGBT media in India. It's your constant feedback, support and encouragement that keeps us going!

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QUEERING THE SMALL SCREEN

BY DEVANSHU SOOD

Sushant Digvikar is a well known face on Television- and one of the very few openly gay ones.

At the young age of 23, he is already a role model to many. Apart from being on popular TV shows like Big Switch and Atyachar ka Panchnama, he's also a karaoke singer, dance trainer and psychologist.

Sushant, tell us about your family and friends..

I come from an extremely open minded, educated and loving family. My parents are not only parent figures for me and my brother alone, they love parenting all our friends are magnificent beings as such. I've also been blessed with such splendid support groups, so frankly I have nothing to complain about. I have fabulous friends who would have been my friends regardless of my sexual orientation. My parents would still love their son as much, whether gay or straight.

Honestly it has been a beautiful life thus far and I also give myself credit for the same because I have been absolutely transparent about myself and my life to my close ones.

How was your coming out experience?

Well, I cannot say that I was ever closeted only because I was around such beautiful people who accepted me for who I was.. A lot of my friends, initially, might not have known about my orientation but it's not like I ever consciously hid it from them. I wanted my own space and I wanted to tell them when the time was right. I never forced myself to act straight. As a kid I did what every other boy my age would do, in fact better. My parents made sure that both their sons were well rounded personalities who would one day be productive members of society.

Tell us more about your teenage years..

I was a national level swimmer, participated in cultural fests in school, and also encouraged all my friends to participate in all the activities that were offered at school. I would inevitably introspect everything I did, which was definitely a rarity among my age group. I was the younger sibling so yes I also must confess that my grandparents showered me with a lot of love and affection which was fantastic because both my parents would be out working although they would each find enough time to spend with my brother and me. I was 18 when I came out to my closest set of friends.

I first confessed that I am gay to my best friend Jui who is no more, I lost my sweetheart to medical negligence. She gave me the strength I needed to come out to my other friends and to my parents.

How about your family?

I knew my dad was cool, and he said, "You are my son regardless of your sexual orientation and always remember that

your mom and I have been nothing but proud of you". That right there was the most special moment for me. My mother on the other hand is a diva. I always tell people I am an amalgamation of good genes.

My mother and I share a special bond, we are more the quintessential best friends than the more mainstream mom and son. She has always been accepting and in fact chooses who I should even go out on a date with. She is absolutely possessive her baby boy and I love that about her. who comes to me for a tarot reading, has a unique story to tell.

What was your first television experience like?

I was 21 years old when I had my TV debut. It was a show for UTV Bindass called BIG SWITCH - Season 3 with seven other spoilt brats and the our godfather in the house, Rohit Shetty. I was openly gay and now also on Indian National Television.

I loved the Big Switch 3 journey because it made me a household name overnight and also because I was being myself in front of everyone. I could show the LGBT youth that once you accept yourself and embrace yourself completely other people around you will automatically be comfortable with you.. After Big switch I got an offer to be an anchor for UTV Bindass, and I was given ATYACHAAR KA PUNCNAMA which was a big responsibility for me after Pravesh Rana did such a fabulous job hosting the sequels Emotional Atyachaar 2 and 3. I was much appreciated.. it happened around the same time I was studying to be a psychologist, early last year.

Shortly afterwards, I was nominated for the I.T.A awards and I couldn't be happier. All along I made sure that people had a good impression about me because now suddenly I was by default representing the LGBT community on national television



My parents would still love their son as such, whether gay or staright.



Why aren't there more openly gay faces on Indian TV?

It is indeed sad that even in the television and film industry there are so many people who are closeted but on the other hand I also believe that if they think that it's not anybody's business to know what happens in their lives it should be appreciated and respected.

However, sometimes I feel that it would be great if prominent personalities come out in the open and just confess about their sexual orientation because that opens up the way for many LGBT youth - they would have a role model, someone they can emulate.

What else do you do besides TV?

I have been the best karaoke singer in Mumbai and the west zone last year as well as in 2012. I never stop myself from doing what I want to do and what makes me happy. I was also a part of Terence Lewis' Academy of Dance as a senior trainer, learned four different forms of martial arts, was a VJ for UTV Bindass and I am now also a psychologist. In college, my cultural team comprised of some of the best teachers and other support staff.

We all loved and respected each other because we were a family.

The only complaint I probably have as a gay boy is that I do not know who to hit on and I cannot tell who is gay and who is not. I do not have a strong Gaydar as my friends call it. Hence, I refrain from making a pass at anyone at all.

What are your thoughts about the recent Supreme Court verdict on Section 377?

I am appalled and hurt more than anything else. On one hand the law says we are free willed and live in a democratic nation and on the other we are denied our rights to live as per our will. It makes no sense to me. And the whole argument of culture should be demolished, so should the arguments about religion.. and for god's sake people like Rahul Eashwar and Baba Ramdev should not voice their absolutely unscientific and patronizing viewpoints on matters that are this delicate. To me Baba Ramdev is an excellent yoga teacher and he should stick to that because I have myself been doing yoga for a couple of years and if he suggests that yoga can cure homosexuality then he has lost the plot completely. This is when I wish we had some asanas to change the mindset of such people.



To me Baba Ramdev is an excellent yoga teacher and he should stick to that.



THE KAZAKY BOYS RETURN

The Kazaky music band is from Ukraine. They share with Pink Pages some of their unreleased photos. Kazaky has become a modern phenom-

enon in Europe's music industry, outstanding nature of which comes not only from spectacular choreography and original sound but from unique stage performance. Within a short period of

time Kazaky made a great stir throughout the world owing to their showmanship. This year they're planning to visit LGBT prides and events in Europe, North and Latin America.











UNDER THE LUCKY STAR

ANWESH KUMAR

I wish to live in a utopian world, a world where I'm free - free to will, free to live, free to dream and free to transform my dreams into realities. This indeed is that vision that keeps me going and makes me stand by my identity (proudly), that I was once ashamed of. But like any other real story it had its share of dark and depressing days. And when I tried finding a solution, I came across the root cause of all my troubles- "The Closet".

Those who are "in" the closet are often stigmatized as living false, unhappy lives. However, we all in general tend to live in and out of our closets. The fear of the unknown makes us do so. And not coming out of it when we're required to can have serious repercussions on our lives.

We as humans are closeted beings. We love to live in our closets- of dreams, of aspirations, fears, sexual orientations, secrets, and of comfort levels. It at first feels good. There is an underlying sense of security that only the walls of the closet can ensure. But then follows the phase of suffocation. The walls that once protected us begin to make us feel restricted. And what follows is the "end of self denial". This is when it all gets better. No matter what, we need to realize that there is a better world and a better life that awaits us on the other side of the closet. A happier and free one. This indeed is that silver-lining to our dark and depressing phase.

At school, the only things we're bothered about are exams and relationships. But, life has a lot more to it. Fourteen years at

school have made me realize that the two most important entities to our lives are our family and our very own being. And we end up spending the least amount of time with ourselves. We are often more concerned about the people around us and this is quintessentially human. There is nothing wrong about it. We only need to make sure that the thin line between 'me time' and the time that we spend thinking about our surroundings isn't blurred.

There was this one point when I just couldn't take it anymore. I hated myself for being different, and I hated that there was nothing that I could do about it. I was constantly being picked on for being effeminate by my peers and some teachers. It was almost as if the entire class was on one side and me on the other, struggling to act straight and fit-in. But I always had my sister by my side. I consider myself to be blessed with an amazing sister and a wonderful teacher. I eventually grew immune to all the crap I was going through. I found hope, self-belief sprinkled with loads of optimism that made me grow stronger. The bullying made me resilient. And as Maya Angelou has quoted, "You may tread me in the very dirt. But still, like dust, I'll rise." We might fall, but we must not break. We must fight for our rights. God made us unique because he loves us. So love yourself, for this couldn't have been better.

Times are changing, and thankfully people around us are evolving. But unfortunately some people decided to live in the bygone era. So the Supreme Court decided to over-ride the July 2009 verdict of the Delhi High Court, effectively re-criminalizing homosexuality or more precisely 'homosexual acts'. The verdict is beyond upsetting. It befuddles me and makes me cringe to see how unaware some of us are. Restoring the Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in a way sends a message to all the homo-phobes out there that, "Yes, you are correct. Homosexuality is wrong. And we stand with you". I don't know if the judiciary realizes how it has actually thrown millions of the so-called "miniscule minority" back into the closet. A life full of misery, loneliness, hopelessness and ignorance. As a gay teen, it made me re-think my decision of coming out.

We belong to different countries, have different beliefs, have different spiritual inclinations and belong to different age groups and generations, but we have all been through the same phase of self denial followed by self-acceptance. I am super-unapologetic about hanging out with girls because that is where I feel comfortable. The fear of the law does haunt me but I'm original and unafraid. I'm certain that to every dark tunnel, there exists a bright light of hope. And today when I look back, I realize how blessed I am to be gay. I definitely believe that being a homo is one of the best things that ever happened to me for it made me all the more resilient, a magnanimous being and almost immune to criticism. The time has definitely come to invest our energy into the social issues related to sexuality for we're all "born under the lucky star".



*Times are changing
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WE ALL SHOULD BE OUT AND PROUD

BY DEVIKA MITTAL

The Supreme Court of India has recently recognised transgenders to be the third gender. They have been recognised as full citizens of the country who will be entitled to equal rights. This decision has been warmly welcomed by not just people of LGBTQ community but also by many amongst the heterosexual community. It is being seen as the realisation of a true and just democracy. It is being hailed as a progressive move.

However, I think that there is much more that the heterosexuals should derive out of this commendable judgement and the larger LGBTQ movement. This decision and the struggle for the equal rights should not just be seen and labelled as 'liberal' or 'progressive' by the heterosexuals. I always feel that the LGBTQ movement is a liberating experience not just for the people of non-heteronormative or diverse sexualities but for all genders. I consider it important to state that I

claim no expertise in this matter. My understanding over the issue is based on basic scholarly literature and the little experience that I have had. In this article, I attempt to share the lessons that I derive from the LGBTQ movement. What it means to me.

The most basic lesson that I derive from the movement is in its very nature. The LGBTQ movement, as the name suggests, is not a homogeneous movement. There are many sub-groups within and they vary greatly in terms of their issues. The LGBTQ community represents and celebrates the diversity that nature has shown in everything including sexuality. Contrary to popular misconception, diverse forms of sexuality are natural. There are several forms of evidence available including the fact that diverse sexualities is present both in plant and animal kingdom. Theorists like Foucault have discussed how heteronormativity has come in a certain historical time in Europe. There are others who have shown how this was



The most basic lesson that I derive from the movement is in its very basic nature. It is not a homogeneous movement.



The LGBTQ movement encourages us to be ourselves, to respect ourselves.

disseminated in different societies through colonialism. Other factors like religion, over-emphasis on fertility and several other social factors led to non-heteronormative sexualities being regarded as a deviant. The LGBTQ movement challenges this and brings to light the truth about the extent of diversity that nature has shown. The nature loves diversity in every aspect including sexuality. Heterosexuality may appear more prominent but it is just one form of the diverse sexualities that are present in the nature.

The LGBTQ movement is a movement of liberation for all. The LGBTQ movement not only challenges the heteronormative society but also the patriarchal society. This is because it challenges the notion of gender as determinants of behaviour. It challenges the gender-based roles and stereotypes. It challenges that sex and gender are natural. It proves that they are social constructions. While we are born with a particular genital, our behaviour, preferences has been constructed by the society. The society makes a man or a woman. It is the society that expects a person with a vagina to take care of the household. The LGBTQ movement disrupts all binary and opposing notions. It does so in several ways.

A homosexual person often challenges the stereotypes conforming to their gender. However, it must be noted that not all

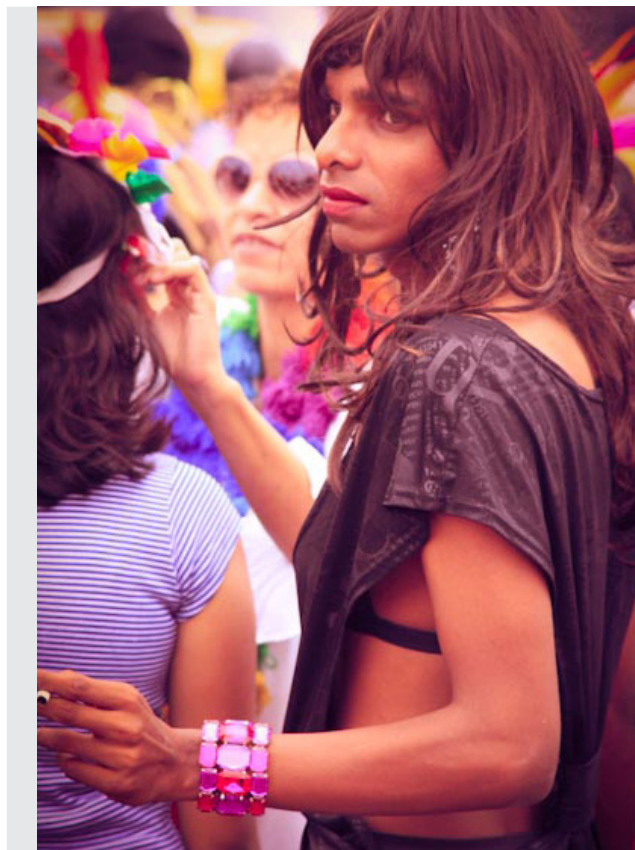
homosexuals will do so. A transgender female may be born with a penis but does not feel or consider herself to be a man. Then there is also the case of inter-sex people. They clearly transcend the binary notion of gender.

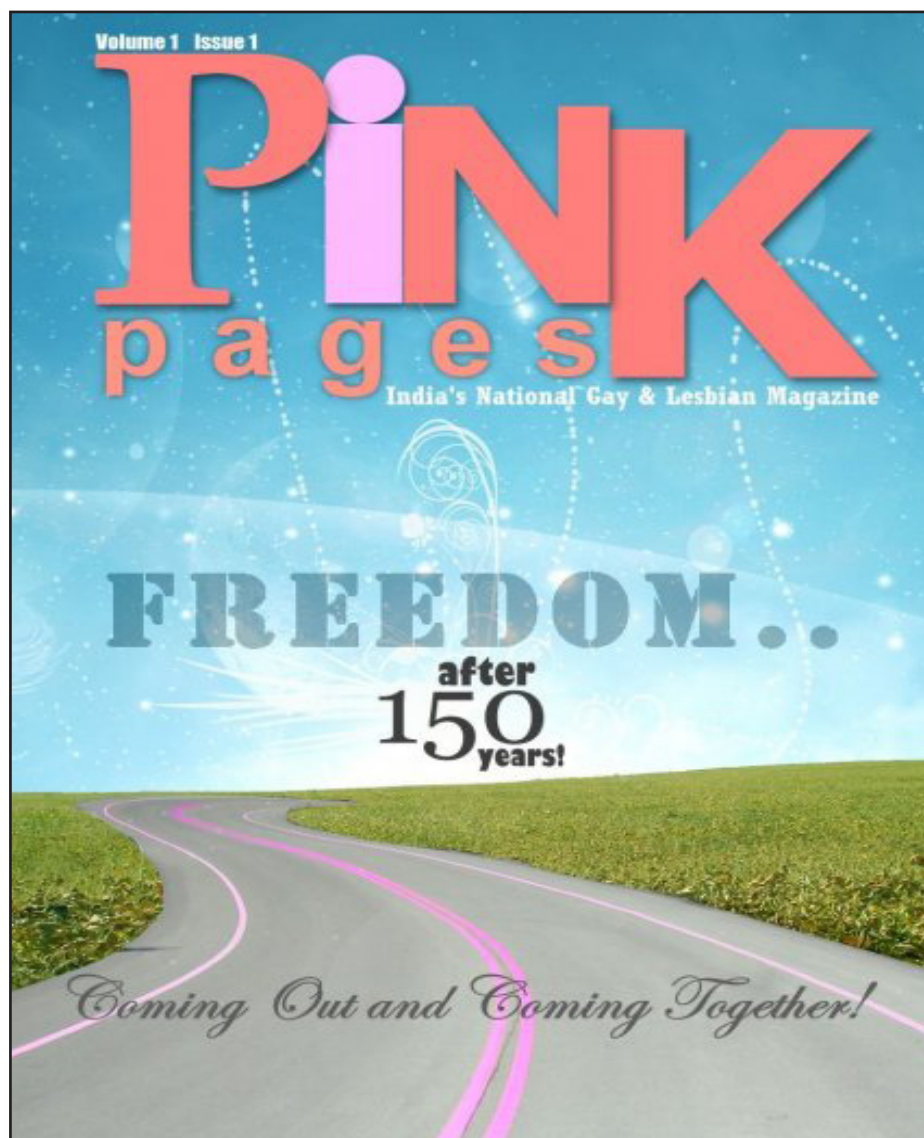
Another fundamental essence of the LGBTQ movement is the emphasis on individual agency. Who gets the right to decide

whether a person is a man or a woman? They would say that the person himself/herself. I find it empowering and extend it beyond this. I see it as this beautiful idea of "I am what I think I am". It talks about the self breaking the constructed barriers. It celebrates the individual that challenges the biased and discriminatory notions, norms constructed by the society. It gives importance to the individual's perspective. It celebrates the voice against injustice and inequality.

To conclude, I think that the LGBTQ movement should be seen as the liberation of us all. It is a movement tied not just to the issue of sexuality. It is waging battles far beyond. It exposes the

society and its norms that we take as "primordial" and "natural" as a construct. It encourages us to come out and speak against the injustice. It encourages us to be ourselves, to respect ourselves.





ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

THE BEST OF PINK PAGES

Since July 2009, we've had the privilege of publishing several captivating essays, short stories and works of art & photography- all coming from India's dynamic and very talented LGBT community. As we complete five years of our existence, we look back at some of the best and most appreciated stories that we have published.

To say that the job of selecting just five out of the countless many was a challenge would be an understatement. We appreciate and deeply value every single one of our contributors over the years and congratulate the writers of these selected pieces!

CHENNAI'S OPEN ARMS FOR THE 'CRIMINALS IN LOVE'

BY MANORATHAN

Manorathan discovers the dark underbelly of Chennai in a rendezvous with male sex workers at Marina Beach- the city's gay cruising spot.

Yearnings have been the cause of ruins of all awful extents from times immemorial and they hold their legacy even now. The paperboy early in the morning greets us with his anxious eyes as we rub our slumbering ones, to earn that extra buck while that late night news reader wraps up the day with his good night (with a perceptibly missing yawn), a desperate call for a break that is needed. In the middle are we, stirred in emotions, I mean, longings, living our day, planned or unplanned, on a balancing gesture, stretching and un-stretching ourselves to meet their demands.

Blinded by the vapoury yearnings, which descend on us with vengeance for demands unfulfilled, rarely are we permitted to desire a breather from an abundance of air, purified of its stagnant redundancy. Such is life, we yell, giving names like commitments and responsibilities for things driven by an inner desire, with exceptions when one still has the shallow and pretentious selflessness to fight with. Violent would the attempts to disrupt this routine be, as the fight is with oneself, for the same one,

when both his selves speak for their parts, proving just. And mine were less crazy in no particular way one can ever come up with!

Night times are my cathartic moments, especially on the roads, when the lights on those ambitious billboards flicker in vivid hues (with the maddening vehicular traffic already asleep), the only signs of life after a busy day. These billboards, no longer the advertisers, now speak of mysterious, flamboyant dreams, giving direction to my aimless walks, with my eyes upturned, catching their flicker and missing nothing, making out images not being seen. The small town boy that I was, Chennai was a network of such streets, unexplored, when I had to relocate here for my under graduation. Let conservative, chicken-hearted, closed circuited (one of my favourites), etc., be the tag words glued to Chennai, but my night trips never had anything to do with these boring modifiers.

It was on one such night did my stress worn feet drag me to the Marina beach, to that gays' corridor, squeezed in between the historic government buildings and the polluted sea waters



beyond a massive expanse of heavily littered sand, with one most remembered chief minister resting peacefully at its side. It's a cruisers' spot in all aspects, religiously revered as 'The sanctuary for Chennai gays' by one petty artist I came across. With the air saturated with stench caused by the wayside urinals, boldly misguided by the 'men only' ambience, I was quite uncomfortable but then I was partly pleased as this place was the closest actualization I could ever achieve of those parks in movies that men frequent, more in night.

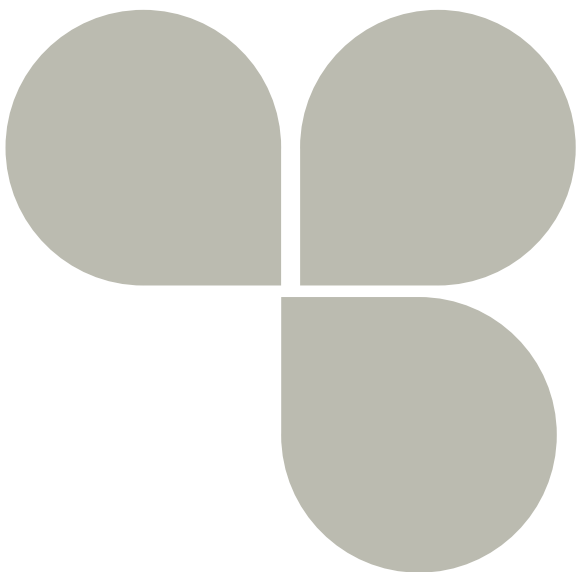
A shady place as it is, why beatify myself by making me the cold researcher, for I was no less a hooker than them, hooking up with the unknown, with no less wants. Everything is decided by a stare over here, and I did know the tricks to avoid being misunderstood as encouraging. Those lusty stares from beefy hunks, enquiring ones from the middle aged (watch out for the pan in their mouths!), timid down-

wardly stares from the grey haired oldies and to top it all, the winners were those desperate, deadly stares, determined to devour you even without a touch! By winners, I mean the most memorable ones and not the actual winning of their pursuit, which is an altogether different story governed not by the magnitude of the stare. Shiny costumes donned by a few, (sex workers, as I heard), add colour to the ageing night, and of course to the wearer." He is a she! No, but she may not be a she! ", so go the comments as a gang of dandies pass by, followed by one figure draped in a sari, in an ultramodern way, rouged cheeks and wet lips! Cars follow them with an unusually slow speed, suggesting an imminent halt with any sign from the group. A few get picked up, while a few refuse to, returning with their hands busy, setting their hair in place. A few smoke, out of anxiety? Or maybe, just boredom.

Those dandies spotted me and came to



Boldly misguided by the 'men only' ambience, I was quite uncomfortable.



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If its a question of whether being 'pleasure-driven or money driven', it has something to do with pleasure.

me asking, "Time enna?" (What's the time?). I could see from his watch that it was 1030. After the regular exchanges of *nom de guerres*, and our fictitious jobs, he then talked about his mansion nearby, hinting his readiness to host me. I didn't want to just lose him for he sounded quite decent and suggested my wish to be here for a few more minutes for which he obliged. Waving at the passersby, he seemed quite well known to most of the well dressed guys there. It was then that I came. Then came a khakhied guy, and then the hushes and the inactivity, the danger as I smelt! Then the normalcy! One of to know about his part time job that helped to fill the hole his mansion's rent made on his tiny pocket.

The elusive male sex workers, non-existent to Indian cinema, with not much citation in articles on prostitution in magazines, were just in front of me. These poor young men, obviously leading double lives by choice, seemed to have arrived at a better solution to lead their less lucky lives. And if it's a question of whether being 'pleasure-driven or money-driven', it has something to do with pleasure, for the guy I talked to, made no mention of my paying him. He was in fact starting to yarn a tale of his love for me, taking my interest as an encouragement! Easy hopes for a simple man, and there, a sign of aspiration! Then were my enquiries about safe sex, and pat came his approval for letting me do him with no rubber. Some people are still into

trusting others, no wonder we still have innocent in our dictionary. Maybe, ignorant is the right word! Not that he was ever told, for he did mention about a few people supplying condoms and a meeting stressing the need for safe sex. The change did happen in his thinking, but not in his way of perceiving things. A seventeen year old getting buggered for money, teens fellingating stinky old men, gay lovers in the flesh trade together, married men trying to earn some extra money and the list went on, of which my ears could hear no more of! Should the blame be on the unjust dancing of money or on the choice of living of a few? And why should there be any blaming, for they are as proud as any other moneymaker, with regrets attributable to the professions of even you and me? Yearning is the common catalyst here (and of course in every other place), the primitive wheel of its own will, with the protagonists stuck to its spokes!

I got an auto back home from the bus stop nearby, shooing away the desperate bikers, who took me for one soliciting sex! Guilty I did feel, for breaking the heart of that overtly romantic young man, and satisfied was me as I got my share of flattery I was so desperate for!

THE TEST

Between Closets dedicates this essay to the worst seven hours of his life. His first HIV test.

BY BETWEEN CLOSETS

When you are gay and you do things out in the dark and with your hormones pumping, you always have to know what is going on in your body. Find the courage to find the truth about yourself.

Yes, I am going to dedicate this one whole topic to the worst seven hours of my life. My first HIV test. If you have an active sex life, and you are gay, there are some ground rules that you have to play by.

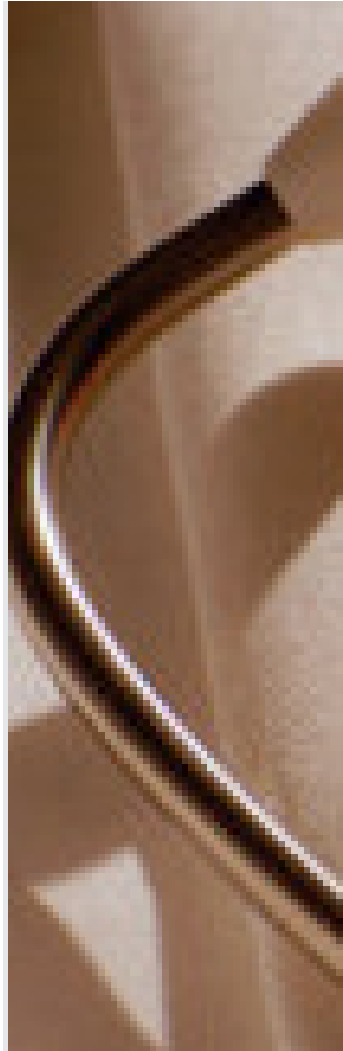
1. Enjoy yourself
2. Be honest with whoever you are having fun with (what the heck, whoever you are fucking)
3. Always be safe
4. Take an HIV test every 6 months.

Oh, let me start by saying again, Prepare yourself for the worst day of your life when you decide to take the test. It needs you to be determined. It needs you to be strong. And it needs you to be patient. It was one week before I was going to turn 26. I was not at all in a mood to go to work. So I called in to take the day off. Ever since I realized I was gay and had started fucking around(once you start and all you want to do is have sex with

any moving thing you see, you just need to follow one simple rule "Always use a condom and lots of lube"). And I have always wanted to take a test when I began to realize what it takes to be gay. But for crazy reasons have been putting it off.

I didn't know if I was ready to handle the truth. But I have been humping for some time now and it's time to face my demons. I had done some research on where to take the test and how it's conducted, how much it costs, will it be kept confidential and what not. I had been relocated to the US from India. But even while I was in my country I had always considered taking the test. But somehow I never made it to the clinic. But staying out in the open world alone gave me the courage to take some responsibility for my actions.

I eventually find out that the local health department conducts free and anonymous HIV testing on particular days of the week. I called up the health department and tried to find out about the procedure to get tested. They asked me to come over. So I drove to the place and damn, I got lost. There were too many departments and too many buildings close by and I couldn't find my way. After driving around the place for about 20 minutes I





decided to get out of the car and walk into a building. It was supposedly the main office for the hospital and I wanted to get to the health clinic. I approached two elderly women who were probably volunteering. I told them I needed to go to a particular address and if they could direct me there. But they were all confused and asked me what I wanted to get done. And then I had to say it—"I am here to take an HIV test". I thought they would freak out. Apparently they were nice enough to not react or say anything at least in front of me. They directed me to the second floor.

I finally went in to a room which said 'Blood Work'. The attendant there was talking to some other people. He asked me if I needed help. I hinted him to come out. But he didn't get the hint and for the second time I had to say it in front of an elderly couple. "I need to get an HIV test done". They stared at me. But I was okay and ready to fight and face anyone that

day (just not ready to face anyone I know, partly because I am still closeted. And I still have to learn to do things myself.) Then the attendant asked me if I had any doctor's reference. I never thought that I need a doctor's reference to get a test done. So, disappointed again, I began to go back. I was so sure that the place I had reached was not the clinic. So I called up the helpline number again and asked them for directions.

Apparently the free health clinics are usually very small and don't have big direction signboards. So I reached the place and I had to sign into the clinic. Again for the 5-6-7-nth time that day I had to explain to everyone that I was there for an HIV test. After I filled the application form I spoke to the really nice lady there and she went through the entire procedure with me. I had requested them not to contact me and that my identity be kept a secret. I signed all the paperwork and then she told me

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*Again for the
5-6-7-nth time
that day I had to
explain to every-
one that I was
there for an HIV
test.*

to go to the waiting room on the lower floor of the testing clinic. So I took an elevator down and went straight to the waiting room. My wait seemed to go on forever. It had already been 45 minutes and no one had attended to me yet. I didn't know what was taking them so long. But I decided to not run away from the place as much as I wanted to. This was my chance to take a bold step and learn to spread my wings and attempt to fly. (I come from a culture which values family. We are always surrounded by people we are related to and are there when you are doing anything with your life. And there I was all alone and waiting to learn the truth; whether I had made any mistake that I may have to regret for the rest of my life.) Finally my paper work got processed and I got called in by a nurse. She was in her mid 50s or 60s. She asked me what I was there for. So I said for the umpteenth time that day "I am here to take an HIV test". She remained calm. She asked what type of test I would like to take. I didn't know a thing about it. She very politely explained to me about the tests that they carried out. Then she asked me when I wanted to know the results. I had never thought about that. She told me you could get them after a week or you could get them in an hour. Okay, I went into a daze. I could know if I had it or not in an hour. Was I ready for it? Was I willing to know? But I had to make up my mind. I said I will wait for an hour and take the results the same day. There was absolutely no way I could have slept for an entire week otherwise. But then again, if I heard anything unpleasant I could never sleep till I got to terms with myself. Finally I decided I was better off with knowing the truth. I wanted to ask all sorts of questions...would I get to see a doctor if I have it...can you counsel me...can I talk to someone? But I put a stop to my thoughts and got a grip over myself. It was too early to think about everything. I had to take this one step at a time. And breathe. So then she said "Well let's fill out some forms and then you will be put through a blood test." (I had recently watched a Sex and the City episode in which Samantha freaks out about her first HIV test...damn! I could SO relate to it now!)

So she starts asking me questions. Do you have sex with men or women? I blurted out men. She didn't look up but I was sure she had checked women. She asked me again "Sorry but can you confirm" I said "I have sex with men". She was taken back, I could understand. One thing I know is never lie to your doctor. It is bad. He is your only hope... in case something goes wrong. She continued with her questions. Have you had sex in the last 3 months? Yes. Have you had sex with multiple partners? Yes. Have you had unprotected sex without a condom? No. Have you had oral sex? Yes. Have you ever been exposed to drugs? No. Have you ever done drugs? No. After some Q & As I was finally through and she asked me to go upstairs and get the blood test done.

I went upstairs and there in the waiting room were four kids and their mother. The kids were so cheerful. But I was so not

in a mood to entertain anyone. After nearly ten minutes the nurse called me in and then punctured my middle finger with a tiny prick. She asked me to go downstairs and wait. The result would be out in probably an hour. I went down to the waiting room and watched the movie that was playing-'Home Alone: 1'. I love that movie. I still remember the time we got our first cable television when I was fifteen. I'd started watching Star Movies and that is what they use to run. I loved the series and I relived the moments. Anyway, back to the tale. I was waiting and desperately trying to flush the ghastly thoughts out of my head. I had taken a passive approach. Deal with one thing at a time and keep the fucking thoughts out. Fifty minutes had passed. I became restless. I finally saw my paper work come in. The nurse at the front desk told me that my attendant will be seeing me shortly. But then the shortly never seem to end. It was already thirty minutes and I started to think...I guess I have it. That's why the nurse isn't ready to talk to me. Probably she is getting a doctor to speak to me or trying to figure out how to tell a gay man that he is positive. All creepy thoughts began to depress me. I tried to think what if I have it. What all are the things I would have to do-1. Get real about the reality, 2. Inform my brother. Talk my heart out to him, 3. Inform anyone I remember I had slept with and ask them to get tested (though hard, it is the right thing to do), 4. Return to my country and start living by myself. Because I am too chicken to put my family through this shit. Then in the middle of my melodrama the nurse calls me in. I was about to burst into tears but I held them back. She told me that I had tested negative. I didn't have it. She went on. The tests are accurate for the 3 months window. And I should get tested again after 3 months. But I was relieved. I didn't have it. I told myself "I don't have it...I have to love myself...and I have to be safe always". She told me to be safe and come back again in 3 months and take the test. And the next time it won't take as much time. I am surely going back and getting the test again because I understand my responsibility. When you are gay and you do things out in the dark and with your hormones pumping, you always have to know what is going on in your body. Find the courage to find the truth about yourself. You owe it to yourself and the person you are in a relationship with. Remember if diagnosed earlier there are surely many things that can help improve or expend the quality of life.

Peace.



"TODAY, I WAS FIRED FOR BEING A FAGGOT..."

Diepiriye Kuku describes his ordeal as a teacher at the American School in Delhi.

BY DIEPIRIYE KUKU

Today I was fired for being a faggot. Midday, April 2009. A call arrived on my mobile phone during lunch and instructed me to see the middle school principal. I had been a substitute teacher at the American School here in Delhi for several years, beginning with an initiative that I started as a resource educator for Black History Month in February 2005.

Africa and African-American parents I knew outside of the school regularly expressed concern that the school celebrated multi-culturalism through a pan-Asian food fare and otherwise provided no real meaningful classroom support for dealing with social difference. I was just in the library editing some papers, which is near the office. So I arrived in the principal's office in moments. For years, I had expected this day, so my cool tem-

perament really threw the principal off her game. She even tried to throw me through several digs, complaining that in one instance I had not precisely followed the absent teacher's instructions. Often teachers don't leave clear instructions, if any, I explained, and had consistently been lauded by teachers and students for helping to make the subject matter more real to the kids. Anyhow, this part of the firing all came as fodder to justify and support her trump card: I had spoken about homosexuality during a class.



As the principal's lips continued to move, I was taken back to 1987 back in Kentucky, and the sheer oppressiveness of the silence around diversity in general. It was my seventh grade, and one classmate accused me of looking at our gym teacher's butt. Having learned no words to speak about this injurious stigmatization, I used my fists. That girl beat my ass. We were separated and sent to the principal's office, a man that had known

me, and these conflicts since second grade. Nonetheless, we had to explain ourselves to him, and as an adult I can say that it must have been crystal clear to the principal that he was dealing with a young person struggling to understand his sexuality. The punishment we received was more sympathetic than harsh. Still, no guidance was offered. I grew up terrified in middle school; I turned in on myself as it became apparent that the secret I held was nasty. My own middle school principal silenced everything homosexual in the same way that this principal was enforcing such silence today by kicking me out of that so-called liberal and progressive educational environment. It didn't matter to her that one of her students called me a "Fag," and that I had used a portion of the class to facilitate a discussion where the young people spoke about how to include people who may feel on the margins in their school. The kids did more of the work of inclusion than the school's curricula, which has a token sprinkling of color, yet is otherwise quite sanitized of reality.

The trouble began 10 days earlier when I received threatening comments on a video uploaded to my YouTube channel where I discuss similarities between queer life in Africa and India. Before quickly deleting his/her user account, Rhubaru wrote: 'This thing (woman?) teaches at a school a friend of mine goes to, it's disgusting. He teaches at one of the top schools on Earth and he's not goddamn fired yet. FORTUNATELY these videos have started to circulate around the staff and parent of the students. I'd only give him a couple of days left at the place. It's really really gross. I don't think my parents would even let me go to a school with staff like that. Not a suitable thing for children to see, especially middle school students.' On another selection of my videos, Rhubaru left the blunt comment: 'You disgust me.' When firing me, the middle school principal quoted Rhubaru's comments as evidence of my immorality. She suggested that I had encouraged kids to visit my channel, based on this another video where I use many curse words to create a comedic play about how my second grade teacher assigned me a nickname on the first day of school. My first grade teacher, another middle-class liberal white woman, never learned to say my name! This was a practice so common at the American School today that once when a Korean student acted out violently in class, none of the other teachers could help me to identify him since they only knew him by the Anglicized name he was politely and gently forced to adopt in the so-called multi-kulti school. Ironically, the initial video in question was not uploaded to my YouTube account, but to a net community to which I belong, and it discussed a specific issue that I faced as a kid, which is an extreme issue at this school. Another middle school parent made me aware that her daughter had found the video and warned me that it had gone viral amount the students. She cautioned me that the school was far too socially conservative for her European tastes and that she had planned to remove her kids as soon as possible.



*It's really really gross.
I don't think my par-
ents would even let
me go to a school
with stuff like that.*

Overall, this experience has reminded me that some people really do see me, hear what I am saying, but only hear an angry negro, because that is indeed all that they are prepared to see. People often ignore what oppression is like. We distance ourselves from the brutal terrorism of the earlier parts of our history, culminating in non-violent resistance. In America, we forget that our culture was born out of domination and absorbing difference into sameness, rather than ever genuinely celebrating our socio-religious and ethnic diversity, regional brilliance and potential for interaction. We live separated along gender, race and class, and thereby are never made accountable for our rhetoric. We can feign commitments to education and flaunt our secular values, while never sincerely confronting difference and therefore engaging in "subject to subject" talk with the 'other'. How could we, when folks like me are simply removed like stains. My circumstances here reminded me more of the abandonment I had felt by the education system that failed

to protect me from regular harassment as a kid, and refused to even acknowledge my difference, save for the innuendoes and quiet conversations years after high-school graduation with retired teachers who always meant well.

Today, I was fired from a job and accused of inappropriately behaving with kids. Instead of forgetting, I remembered how as a child I longed for someone to help me understand my difference, to assist me in processing the taunting, harassment and abuse that terrorized me throughout my youth as an effeminate boy, and I continue to sift through the residue. Where were the gay teachers? I had met one, and years later thanked him for showing up at school every now and then. He never breeched the subject with me, but it was his pride that shined through. As much as schools work to reinforce a heteronormative environment under the guise of safety and 'appropriateness', a modern world must make concerted efforts to cultivate diversity, to teach peace through dialogue, and never shy away when confronted with alterity. The American School's middle school leadership in question here has regularly put students' lives through her fear-of-the-other. Black youth, and boys in particular, have expressed to me several ways in which they emotionally feel unsafe at this school and are usually too few in number to perceive of their collective stereotyping- at this age they take it personally.

Much like the weekend Korean language courses at the school organized by Korean parents targeting young Koreans growing up outside their home environment, Black parents both in America and certainly at this school must manage to pick up the pieces and heavily supplement the book learning if ever their kids are to develop a healthy self-image. Korean and other East Asian students are the second largest visible ethnic cluster among the school's student population.

Students have told me that they suffer the same sort of homogenizing force of oppression, the tacit assumption that everybody wants to be white and elite, though their families are numerous and inter-connected enough to form a refuge. Many of the American expatriates may even begin to use the terms 'white' and 'western' interchangeably, though I suspect that electing the first president of color will give many permission to come out from under the cloak of political correctness. Moreover, teachers do not bother learning their names, for example, and liberally suggest Anglicized nicknames. Likely the teachers have the best intention of integrating the kids into the fold. It's radical to think that educated adults are unaware of the respect demonstrated by just paying enough attention to learn to properly pronounce an individual's name. By those standards, it's easy to see how individuality is discouraged while maintaining the façade of plurality. Yet as the old saying goes: Last hired, first fired. In the age where money talks, Rhubaru's folks apparently yield a great wand than most, as the school is indelibly linked to the American Embassy and its socio-political whims. Yet, instead of being their fall guy, I follow my own example set in middle school when I first became aware that such targeted discrimination would follow me: Pray for the other's happiness for they know not how much they damage their own karma with such displays of moral drawback and pestilence. Most of all, we must speak out. Silence is the virtual key to our continued exploitation, and fear its fulcrum. Hence, the courage to love ourselves and a healthy self-esteem is always the answer. As queer people, it is our responsibility to speak up and speak out. Whether you reach out to a friend, or extend your words to masses, know that none of us are alone. By speaking about, we build a consensus of love and respect against the quiet tide of heterosexual panic.



I remembered how as a child I longed for someone to help me understand my difference, to assist me in processing the taunting, harassment and abuse.

PROFILING THE GAY BITCH

BY HARISH IYER

Harish Iyer's funny take on the various kinds within our kind!

Disclaimer: before you start bitching about this article. Let me tell you that this is a post about some gays, and definitely not all gays. I am in no way generalizing. And if you get offended by this article, may be, you are the gay bitch I'm talking about. This is an account of the different kind of bitches that I have found and about their fake prides and real prejudices.

I wonder sometimes what the Akhil Bharatiya gay Samaj is all about? Before I opened the doors of the closets to smell fresh air, I remember I encountered many types of this vicious animal called the gay bitch – I hope animal rights activists don't take offence to the word 'bitch'. I am a bitch lover myself. With all due respect to animals, the creatures I'm talking about are pests without breasts. They have an innate ability to speak about anything and everything from Botox to buttocks. They are a walkie-talkie encyclopaedia of everything queer. But Aami Shotti Bolchi! My list is in no way comprehensive. And may be, I also would fall in one of these categories.

Bottom Pinch!

"I don't do THAT with anybody and everybody OKAY! Fuckta ('only'- in marathi) boyfriends"

Hold On! Never disrespect their posterior. Their back is not some kirana ka dukaan (mom and pop stores) that dick-headed wholesalers can stock their groceries over. These are the monoga-

mous glam dolls of tinsel town. They are exclusive. They don't suffer fools. They are the pristine majestic queens.

I encountered one recently and got too close for comfort. I was just going to build a temple in my mind for this devi who I thought was ganga ke jaise pavitra. (holy as river Ganges)

only to realize that this river has been overflowing. Even the once-upon-a-queer watchman has visited this holey shrine (pardon the typo). In fact, I really wished to add his holeyness as one of the many tourist attractions in Bombay. I'm sure, anyone and everyone who is even remotely-occasionally- periodically-seasonally gay and has visited Bombay has at least once, has not





He displayed masculine behavior in childhood and, as a teen, experienced attraction only to women.

only most definitely visited the Gateway of India, but also has sunk in this river. And he was right, they all were boyfriends. Relationships with tourists are butt short-lived. As the flight takes off, another lands- life goes on.

Bedroom = Drawing Room!

“and you know... he was so short”

These are the kind of people who are bubbly and hip. They have a clean heart. They tell it all and make their Dil halka (lighten the heart). And when they have told it all they can take the next download from the next gay guy around. They may not be able to solve your problems. But will be there to laugh it out and discuss. It is called ‘lightening the mood’ (not yours, but theirs)

My experience with such people has been great. With people like these porn-audio-books will have no market. I have also been educated about my near and dear ones by them. They know who does what and how well. They disclose their bedroom secrets with panache and élan. They have an eye for detail even when I don’t have the ears for detail. They warn you so that you even by mistake don’t indulge in an UFO moment in your sacred space in the Queer World. (UFO = Unintentionally Fornicating Objects). You need to ensure that you don’t wake up on the wrong side of the bed with them. (If you know what I mean) for even the beauty spot in your butt will be magnified for public viewing pleasure. Well, this is what I call “pimples in the butt of humanity.”

The Virile Viral Giants

“... this guy is such a show off”

This is the kindest prototype of the desi gay species. They are kind in the real world. Real kind people. They appear to be those few doting friends you can always count on. They are the ones who appear to complete your world with all the niceness and goodness. They are sweeter than saccharine, cuter than a pug puppy, fresh and positive as a sun flower. They are all that you would want in a perfect person.

Wonder why then they are totally different online. I mean, they are so mean online that even the good old mother-in-laws of Hindi television will be given a run for their money. They are the uncrowned vamps of the facebook world. They tweet a never-ending attack until you scream in agony. They are like loose motion. Their attack is pungent. They are the people who would be blue colored in real life and will have screen shots of blue films in gay dating sites. Their profile in gay dating sites would read “NO CLEAR FACEPIC. NO REPLY”, it is an irony that their pics would be of their genitals. (I tell myself “so what?

Honey! May be they feel that's their face pic") They would start a whole campaign to vilify someone. They are sometimes homos in real world but still in the closet. Kudos to their skill to be a part of the queer world yet launch an attack from within. Now I know where the phrase "meri billi aur mujhi se meow?" (My cat and she meows me?) comes from.

Zip it!

"schhhhhhh.... It's a secret"

Closets are the sexiest place for some people. They maintain the secrets there. The secrets are well guarded. And there is no possibility of a leak anywhere.

Yeah... I know of a group of such people who are secretive with everybody. I was told about a secret by ten different people about one person. But yes, it is still a secret. Also, there are secrets like having sex with a closeted guy. I know a guy who was closeted. So closeted that in his early twenties, his count of sexpedes has almost reached 200, so I presume that he is closeted with everybody, and everybody is closeted with everybody, so no one knows! What a well guarded secret! even Sherlock homes can't find out. Ain't it?

The Religious Types

"... can I enter into nirvana"

God is in them – they have divinity flowing in every cell of their body. You are engulfed in the aroma of agarbattis (incense sticks) and mombattis (candles) as soon as they open their mouth. And you feel like you are floating in the cosmos with some fluorescent light acting as a halo around your head when you are with them. That blessed you are with divine bliss!

The problem is that the halo is hollow. The extension of religion is on regions even religion would have not thought about. Like I had this 'encounter' with this guy some ten years back, we dated over yahoo messenger. He spoke about the bad sex he had, and good sex he had and the usual sex he had. He spilled a lot of beans about the cherries that he popped in. He informed me that he was orally explicit. (I heard him say 'yumm') Our web cams knew more about us. And we wished we met in real. And then the day arrived. It was his house and his velvet bed. He was all over me... Suddenly reality struck me like a thud. This man said that he will not engage in oral sex as he is vegetarian... Puzzled, I asked "heinn... so what's that got to do with oral sex" and he replied "I am a. And my religion doesn't permit eating non-veg". My orgasm responded quickly to this organism that had his head on just below my navel. And I lost my libido immediately. I replied "dude. This isn't pork sausage" and my name is not "dinner".

That's what is called the trip of the lip of the divine consciousness. Khair chodo (well! leave it) , Guess, it isn't sin to drive someone up the mountain and then pushing him to ensure he comes tumbling down. Huh!

F'n'F

"fuck and forget... married men.. no way"

What on earth would do a married man? Sin it is, to lie and lay. to do a man during the wee- sunny hours , And sleep with a woman at the end of the day.



God is in them - they have divinity flowing in every cell of their body.

When we narrate incidences about married men keeping their wives in the dark, suddenly the andar-ki-feminist (the feminist within) of gay men finds an uprising. One of my friends told me “I had sex with him anyway – three times. But it just happened, I had not planned it. I am not the F n F (fuck and forget) types. I would not do married men consciously”. (Did that sound like “I am pregnant, but not my fault, it’s by accident”?) I was like “yaa baby. You did it thrice subconsciously-unconsciously”. Guess such minds should be preserved in a metaphysics museum. The fact is that most would care a duck about marital status if the guy was smoking hot.

English Babu

... LOTR is my DDLJ”

English is at the tip of tongue of these people. They love English. They watch only English movies. And they have only English sex. I mean moaning in English. (Haven’t you heard the awww.. baby... go slow... baby” orgasm ?) Johnny Depp is their Shahrukh Khan, and LOTR is their DDLJ. They have a great sense of English humour. They know the difference between English and Irish just as eloquently they can point the difference between American and Australian English. (It is not their fault that when they were born, first the encyclopedia popped out of the womb)

They wouldn’t have “fun” with desi guys (at least that’s what they say in exclusive public forums) I know of people of the English Babu category whose

fantasies would include the likes of construction workers and “rugged” Indian men (Rickshaw and Cabbie Drivers can jump the queue) They would only have coffee at costa and barista. (Please ensure that you pronounce coffee in a way that the tip of your throat feels tickled- ‘KHAUFFF... EEEEE’). They hate GrammarGandus (grammar assholes) like me and read fat novels. Their general talks revolve around cars and bikes while other lowly creatures would be cribbing about the time table of local trains or metros going haywire. They are clearly the divide between HS (high society) and LS (low society). Everything that’s not English is LS. You have to shake your head and acknowledge – (understand this “emancipated into the doctrine of being flabbergasted about the core identity of queerness and the heteronormative nature of the homosapien that is lost in the core indulgence of fornication.” Didn’t understand? {rolls eyes and says to self : Fuck! Eww! How dumb! } And if you don’t know who Dumbledore uncle or Rowling aunty is then you are definitely simply not their “type”. Every party that plays Hindi music is a nautanki. Bollywood is a no brainer. “I wanted to go to a party, and uff.. I came to this mujra” – have you heard that before?

Self Confessed Saints

“ I like him. But I don’t like his devious ways.”

The above statement doesn’t mean that he doesn’t like him Okay!. It only means that he doesn’t like him when he does something stupid, but likes him other-



*They won’t have ‘fun’
with desi*



These people are like cats. They have 9 lives and run behind the media.

wise.

Such people think they are god's gift to mankind. Every day there will be people thanking them on their facebook walls. They would have fan pages and secret admirers. Some would flaunt their photos with them, while others will simply make them their man-mandir-ka-devta. (God of the temple of the heart) They are the ones who flaunt their entourage of fans and are seen in TV all the time. (So much that if you don't see them on TV you wonder "I hope he is alive")

These people are like cats. They have 9 lives and rush behind the media like how your friendly neighbourhood Tom runs meowing behind fisherwomen. They are people who would orgasm instantly when you spell the M of media. Their eyes pop out and they turn into a different species when the camera is switched on. They recycle the same things in different words in different channels. (Well its not their fault if media calls them? – they say. Like they are the only gay man alive in India) They are shameless self patronizing kinds. These people will never take a stand because they are scared that their sacred position will be threatened by opponents. They are the do-gooders who will not risk their position by being the queer king speaking against anything or anybody. I wonder how they always have a sad story to share. I'm seriously bored of seeing them rant about their life perpetually virtually everytime.

These are people who bitch about the whole world in the pretext of writing an article on Gay Bitches. Media Sluts like Harish Iyer fall in this category. (Guess he has a Hate Page on facebook – let me go and LIKE that)

How convenient? Isn't it?

ENGAGEMENT

BY VIKRAM KOLMANNSKOG

Vikram Kolmannskog's beautifully written, almost poetic work of fiction from our Queer Literature Special

NT. LIVING ROOM – EVENING.

We see an ad about ADI with facial photo, personal data on weight, age etc. on shaadi.com. We hear Temple bells from afar. Then we see the reflection of Adi's actual face on the computer screen, a beautiful boy in his early twenties.

ADI [OFF]: Ma, you're lying!

Adi sits next to a table with a laptop. Red evening sun shines in through a window. MA enters with fresh gujiya.

MA: What are you saying about your own mother! Have you no shame!

Adi gets up and walks towards Ma with a smile, takes a gujiya and puts it quickly in his mouth before putting an arm around her.

ADI: 185 cm, ma?

He stands on his toes.

MA: Yes, beta. Just continue with the yoga and you'll get there.

ADI: I'm not really wheat coloured either. What about writing mud colour; can't that be a bit sexy? Or brown like Cadbury milk chocolate? Who wants wheat?

Ma hits him lightly on the chest.

MA: Stop fooling around! On the profile picture you're wheat coloured. You just have to stay out of the sun. Don't be so difficult. Amir's mother found him a bride on shaadi dot com in one two three. He's not 185 cm and wheat coloured. I don't even know if he likes, well, you know.

ADI (shocked): What?

MA: Adi. You know what they say about him?

(Silence)

I know that you're close friends, and I see his mother as a sister. But Muslim boys and men are a little different from us, you know. Amir already has a bad name here, and for good reasons I think. If you spend too much time with him, it may rub off.

ADI: Or maybe he'll get a better name from being with me. I'm going out for while now, Ma.

MA: Out now? You just got home, and the Holi celebrations are about to begin.

ADI: I'll be back soon.

MA: Where are you going? People...

ADI: People people people. What do you think people are saying about you?

MA: Adi! I've only done my best to take care of you and give you a good upbringing. Your father... What could I have done?

She sits down at the table and seems to be on the brink of crying. Adi hesitates for a moment, but then walks over and places a hand, reluctantly, on her shoulder.

ADI: Let's not talk about him again. I just mean that people say all kinds of things about all kinds of people in this town.

MA: They'll see. Soon you will be well married. Then you can live here and take care of your old mother.

Adi pulls back his hand as if he suddenly burnt himself on his



mother's words.

ADI: You're 40 years, Ma. You're not old. And I'm 23. Old enough. I actually can't believe that you made a profile about me on shaadi dot com. Did you think I would be happily surprised? I won't accept this. I'm not going to move back here. I'll stay in the city after I finish my exams.

MA: I thought this was something we could do together, Adi. Of course you can change the profile as you want. Change the cm and the wheat.

(Silence)

Just delete the whole thing! Don't worry about me! I can live and die here alone!

ADI: I'm going out now, Ma. I'll see you later.

Adi exits. Ma remains at the table and comforts herself by eating a gujiya.

EXT. RIVERSIDE – DUSK.

Adi lies with his head on AMIR's lap. Amir is in the middle of his twenties. He

leans towards a Palash tree in full bloom. Chirping can be heard from all the birds that are settling for the night. Some red flowers fall down on the boys. Adi wets a finger, takes some soil on it and draws a line on Amir's forehead.

AMIR: Blessing me, jaanejaan?

ADI: Would you accept my blessing?

Amir wets a finger, takes some soil on it and draws a line on Adi's forehead. He continues making a dot on his nose.

AMIR: (reciting from Haqiqat al-Fuqara)

"So Madho, too, was playing Holi on Basant, handsome and graceful, winsome and coy, Playing with everyone, immersing himself in frolic, teasing everyone and dallying seductively, He strode up to Hussayn very shyly and threw colours over his head and his shoulders And as he poured colours over his hair and clothes he sang and his body arched in a dance before him."

ADI: Vah, vah! You and your Sufis.

//

*Again for the
5-6-7-nth time
that day I had to
explain to every-
one that I was
there for an HIV
test.*

Amir carefully draws around Adi's lips.
AMIR: "Hussayn, in his longing, took on
a lively air – his feet suddenly
nimble, his steps answered
Madho's dance. To his haughty
grace Hussayn's every gesture
implored and Madho himself became
Hussayn's game of Basant."
Adi has closed his eyes. They remain in silence for a little while.
It darkens quickly. Amir looks at Adi and shakes him.
AMIR: Adi, Adi!
ADI: What? What's wrong?
AMIR: You were sleeping.
ADI: Yes. And why not let me sleep a little, idiot?
AMIR: I don't know. I was suddenly afraid. Suddenly, I felt so
alone.
Adi stands up and looks out over the river. He can glimpse the
full moon.
ADI: I was dreaming.
AMIR: What did you dream?
ADI: I don't know.

(Silence.)
I have to call Ma.
He takes a mobile phone out of his pocket and dials her number.
ADI: Hi, Ma. I just wanted to say sorry. I know that I've just arrived,
and I know that you only meant well. I'll be home soon, and we
can go to the bonfire together.

(Silence)
Yes, sorry.
(Silence, looks at Amir and rolls his eyes)
Yes, I have no shame.

(Silence, caresses Amir's hair)
Right now? Right now I am by the river.
(Silence, pulls his hand away from Amir and walks over to the
river)
Yes, I'm with Amir.

(Silence)
Ma. I'll see you later.
(Hangs up)
Amir gets up and walks over to Adi who stands with his back
to him.
AMIR: Anything wrong?

(Silence)
Adi-jaan, what is it?
Amir places a hand on his shoulder. Adi pushes it away and turns
around so they stand face to face.
Adi: When were you thinking of telling me?

Amir: I thought you'd be happy.
Adi: Of course. Congratulations, Amir!
Amir: She's lesbian, Adi.
Adi: What do you mean?
Amir: We've made a deal. She knows about you. She also has
someone else.
Adi: And you think no one will find out?
Amir: People don't care so much as long as you're married.
Adi: Does your mother know?
Amir: I think so. I think she's happy as long as I get married. Why
aren't you happy, Adi? We can continue.
Adi turns around and sits down by the river. Amir shakes his
head, walks over to the tree, breaks off a thin branch. Some birds
fly out of the tree. Adi gets back up and turns towards him.
Adi: I don't know if I want to be your someone else.
Amir: So how the hell were you thinking of doing this, Adi?
Adi: We could have refused, Amir. You could have come to the
city. We could have lived there. The two of us.
Amir walks towards Adi.
Amir: "We could have lived there. The two of us." Which country
are you living in?
Adi: The country where the anti-gay legislation that the British
introduced has been rejected by our courts. The country where
there are several cases of same-sex Hindu marriages. I just read
in the paper about two girls who got married...
Amir: And soon after committed suicide Adi!
Adi: Relax! I have no plans of dying in order to be with you, Amir!
Amir:

(recites Mir Taqi "Mir")
"God having given these boys such
beautiful faces Should have given
them a bit of compassion too."
Adi: Don't you have any words of your own, Amir? Is everything
an act?
Amir takes hold of Adi's shoulder. Adi tears himself loose. They
struggle with each other, and Adi falls in the river with a SPLASH.

EXT. UNDERWATER SCENE – MOONLIT NIGHT.

Black.
We only hear the sounds of a dolphin. Then we see an unfocused
close-up of the dolphin. The image becomes clearer. Adi
is hovering in the water while watching the dolphin. The dolphin
swims up and disappears in the light from the moon that shines
through the water. Dolphin sound changes to flute tune. In the
light we can glimpse KRISHNA slowly descending. Krishna is
dark, almost blue. He is wearing a golden dhoti, and the bare
chest is covered with a flower garland. He has a beautiful face
and flowing hair with a peacock feather attached.
Krishna reaches Adi and places his mouth on Adi's mouth. Maybe
giving air, maybe a kiss. Adi exhales and bubbles form in the

water. It repeats itself. Adi looks around. Some FIGURES appear out of the bubbles in the blue water. They dance around them. Young and old, women and men, men dressed as women, women dressed as men, Amir, Adi's mother – all appear and disappear in the round dance.

When we again see Adi, it is no longer Krishna but Amir who has grasped hold of him and swims towards the surface. They break the surface and gasp for air. Palash flowers are floating all around them.

EXT. SQUARE – MIDNIGHT.

Men, women and children are gathered around a bonfire on the square. Some people walk around the fire sacrificing wheat and oats while chanting religious verses. Amir, who has changed clothes, is standing with Amir's mother further away from the bonfire. Adi, who has also changed his clothes, comes up to them.

Adi: Salaam, auntie.

Amir's mother: Namaste, beta.

(Silence, looks around)

Where's your mother?

Adi: She wasn't feeling well.

Amir's mother: How sad, especially now during Holi! Nothing serious I hope?

Adi: It'll pass.

Hijras come up to them, dancing and singing. Amir's mother quickly hands them some money and turns her attention to Adi and Amir.

Amir's mother: You've heard that we have a bride for Amir?

Adi: Yes.

Amir's little brother, a boy in his late teens, comes up to them. He shakes hands with Adi, but remains quiet.

Amir's mother: I'm sure you'll find someone soon as well. You've started looking, right?

Adi: I've already found someone.

Amir's mother: Oh? I can't believe your mother hasn't said anything. Who's the lucky girl? Is it someone you're studying with? Is it through shaadi dot com? Have you set a date?

Adi: It's a boy. A very unlucky, Muslim boy.

Amir's mother: You must be about to finish university now soon? Your mother misses you so much. It'll be good for her to have you back here and married, beta.

Adi looks at Amir.

Amir: Ammi, I've changed my mind.

Amir's mother: No, beta. No.

(Silence, places her hands on her head)

I don't seem to feel very well either. Maybe it's something in the air. I want to go home now.

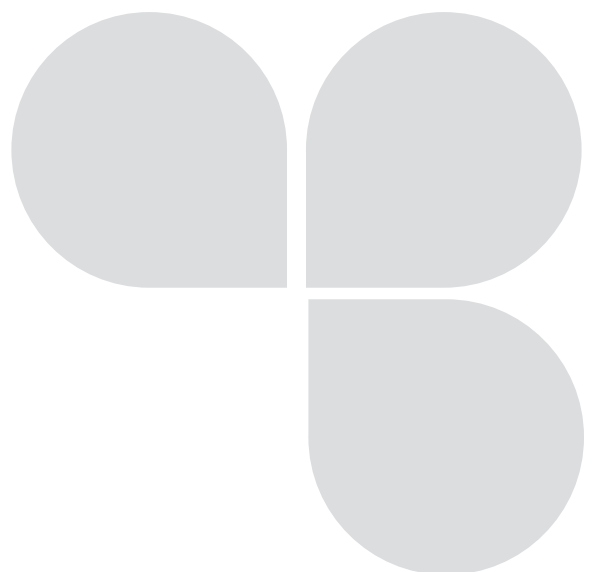
Amir's little brother: I'll take you, Ammi.

Amir: I'll stay here with Adi.

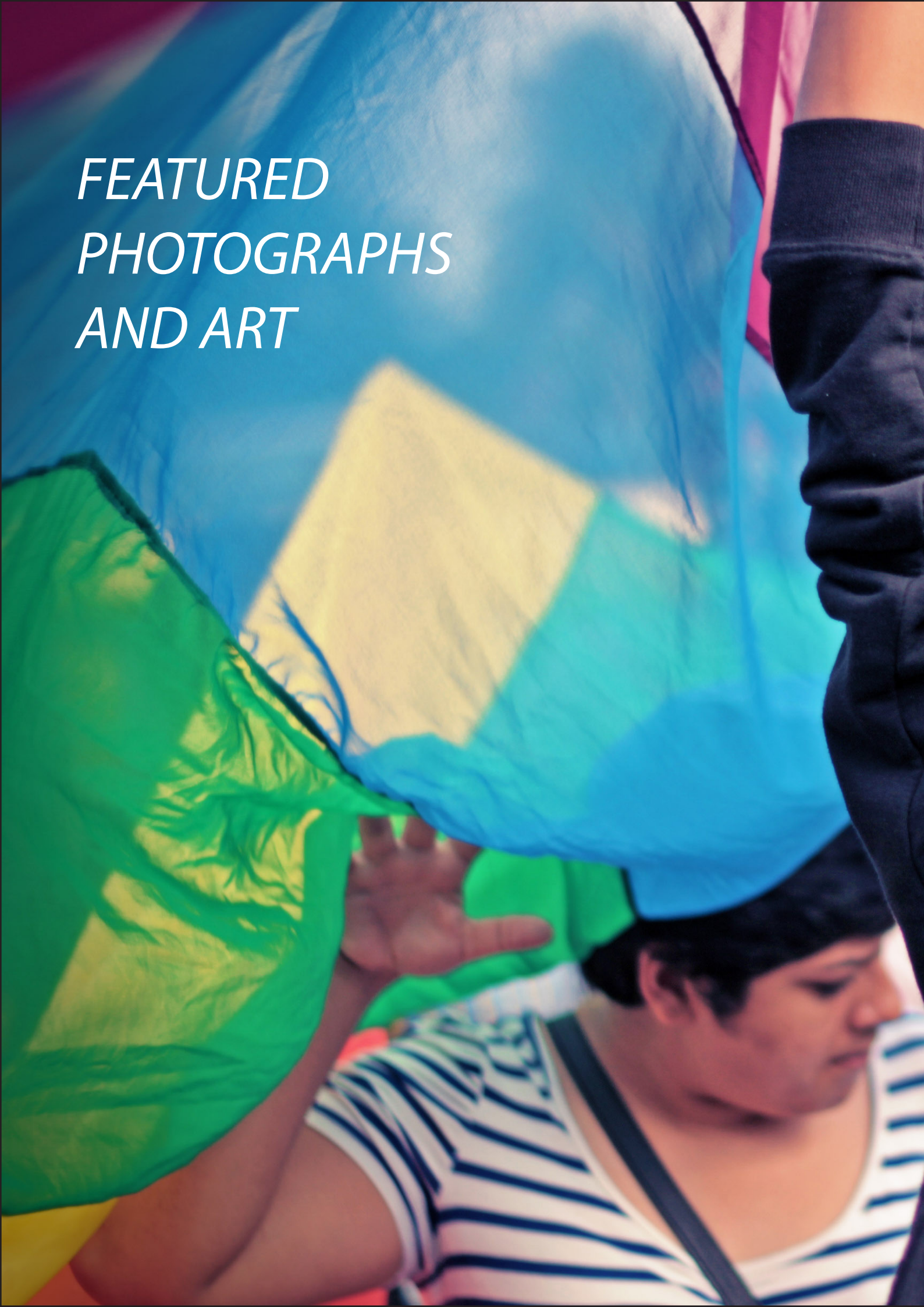
Amir's little brother nods. Amir's mother looks terrified at Amir before she sends Adi a poisonous look, turns around and walks away.

There is quite a crowd around the bonfire now. Adi and Amir smile at each other. Adi takes Amir's hand. They walk around the fire together.

CLOSE-UP OF THE FIRE, ONLY FIRE AND ITS SOUND



*FEATURED
PHOTOGRAPHS
AND ART*



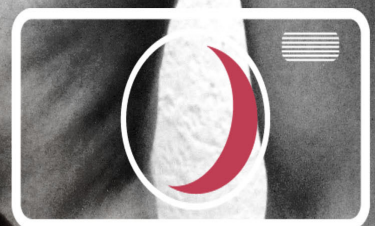


Amar Mitra, Winter 2012





Shashank Tyagi, Fall 2011



studio 59



Roy Sinai, November 2009





Sunil Gupta, February 2010





*Rudra Kishore Mandal,
Winter 2011*





*Dinudey Baidya,
January 2011*





THE BUZZ

NEWS, VIEWS & RE-
VIEWS FROM ACROSS
THE GLOBE

POLITICS

LGBT INDIANS REACT TO NEW NDA GOVERNMENT

The center-right BJP has won a thumping majority in the Lok Sabha elections. However, the LGBT community in India has reacted with caution. Anjali Gopalan-Human rights activist and founder and executive director of The Naz Foundation, which provides a variety of services to gays, lesbians, transgendered and those impacted by HIV/AIDS, also expressed hope in the upcoming administration. She said they were still fighting for

decriminalisation of homosexuality and hoped that the new Government, under Modi, would be more sympathetic to the concerns of the LGBT community. In a recent development, spokesperson of the Hindu nationalist RSS Ram Madhav told a National Daily that criminalization of homosexuality is questionable.

LEGAL

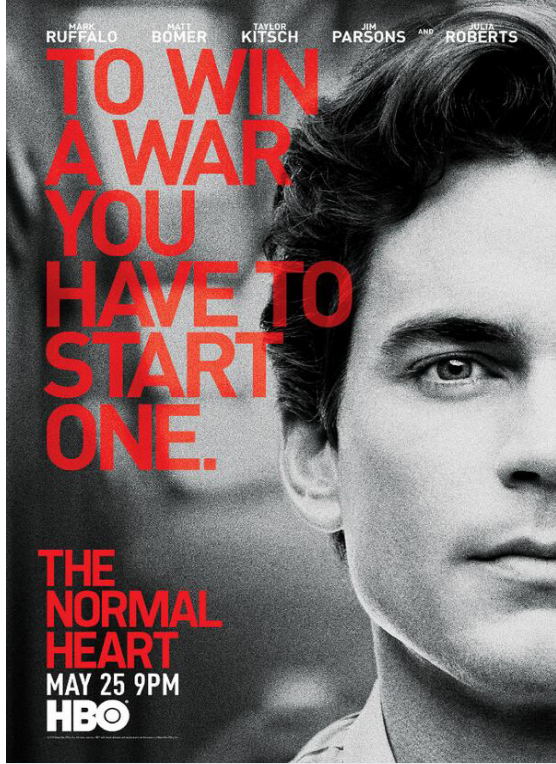
SECTION 377 UPDATES

The Supreme Court has agreed to have a relook at the December 2013 verdict on

Section 377 that recriminalized gay sex in India. This is only the third time in the history of the apex court that a curative petition has been accepted. Also significant is the fact that the court has agreed to have open court hearings during the review proceedings. However, hearings are not expected to start until the summer break gets over in July.

TELEVISION

UNIVERSAL ACCLAIM FOR HBO's 'THE NORMAL HEART'



Based on the play by Larry Kramer, this is the story of the onset of the HIV-AIDS crisis in New York City in the early 1980s, taking an unflinching look at the nation's sexual politics as gay activists and their allies in the medical community fight to expose the truth about the burgeoning epidemic to a city and nation in denial. Mark Ruffalo, Matt Bomer and Julia Roberts are part of the

star studded cast.

BOOKS

THE PRINCESS AND THE TREASURE BY JEFFERY MILES

Jeffrey Miles- a business professor at the University of the Pacific wrote a children's picture book with a same-sex

marriage, titled The Princes and The Treasure. The book tells the story of two handsome princes who go on a quest to save a princess, but fall in love with each other, get married, and live happily ever after. "With the progress of same-sex marriage, I wanted young and old alike to be able to read a fairy tale story that included a gay marriage", said Miles. iconic Funny Boy.



COME LET'S F@!L!

FAIL THE HIV TEST, USE A CONDOM.



A Public Health Campaign By Mission for Indian Gay & Lesbian Empowerment .www.Mingle.org.in